

SONORAN DESERT TORTOISE HANDLING PROCEDURES



Stay back at least **25 feet** from the animal. Stop work in the immediate area to include turning off all equipment. Allow the animal to move from the work area without intervention. **PLEASE BE PATIENT!**

If the animal is within traffic lanes, on the road shoulder or within a median area or if it is heading for traffic or found within an active construction site, and is in imminent danger, do the following:

- 1) Determine which way the animal is traveling.
- 2) Put on a new pair of **medical gloves** and slowly approach the animal from behind if possible. Most animals will stop moving and retreat into their shells upon your approach.
- 3) In order to keep the animal from voiding its bladder (this **can result in its death**, if it cannot re-hydrate) secure the animal at the front of its shell with one hand and with the other hand push its tail gently inward and up. Position your hand at the front end of the tortoise to support its



underside and then lift the animal off the ground. Keep the animal upright, don't shake it or run, walk slowly and carefully making sure that the tail is tucked in, and do not hold the animal against your body.

- 4) Move the animal to a safe distance (**300 feet**) from the project site in the direction it was originally heading. Place the animal in the shade of a shrub, tree, or boulder and observe it for about 10-15 minutes from a 25-foot or greater distance to ensure it does not travel back toward your work area.

- 5) Discard the gloves to ensure that disease is not spread to another animal from your contact with a potentially sick animal. A very sick animal will have puffy eyes, a runny nose, dried or wet nasal discharge on its beak and/or arms, raspy breathing, and limp limbs.
- 6) If you encounter a sick, dying, injured, or dead tortoise or if the ambient air temperature exceeds 105° F, please contact the **ADOT EPG Biologist** at **602-712-7767** and **jlife@azdot.gov** immediately with the location of the animal. These animals will be collected by trained personnel, an ADOT EPG or Arizona Game and Fish Department biologist (AGFD).
- 7) Note the mile post and location of any tortoise encountered and **report your finding** to the ADOT EPG Biologist. Photograph the animal if possible.
- 8) Check under all vehicles and equipment before starting operations or leaving the work area.



- 9) If you observe poaching, collecting, selling, or any other illegal activities, contact AGFD's OPERATION GAME THIEF at **1-800-352-0700**, 24 hours a day or at <http://www.azgfd.gov/thief>.

